

NPBA Hospital Records Database

Overview:

In 1882 Northern Pacific Railroad general manager Brigadier General Herman Haupt (1817-1905) established the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA). Employees of the railroad were offered the option to enroll in the Association for healthcare coverage for a nominal premium. By 1905 hospitals were sited across the railroad system in the states of Minnesota, Montana, and Washington. The westernmost unit was located in Tacoma, Washington.

The first Tacoma patients were admitted in August, 1905. Admission and discharge information of each patient was handwritten, one patient record to a page in bound ledger-style volumes. Each volume contained 500 entries which included the patient name, address, age in years, admission date, name and address of nearest relative or friend, nationality and religion, nature of employment, the division, station and supervisor name, date of service with the railroad, diagnosis, discharge date and outcome of treatment. There was space allotted to list valuables as well. The completeness and clarity of the information entered varied from clerk to clerk.

Description:

This database reflects the extraction of the first 10,000 of approximately 70,000 records at the Research Center of the Washington State Historical Society arranged in alphabetical order by last name. Included with the patient name is hospital record number, age, date of hire, job title, and nationality. Three volumes containing records 1500-2000 and 9000-10,000 are lacking. The records extracted begin with record 000 written August 2, 1905 and end with record 10999 written March 16, 1915.

Reader Advisories:

1. These records are case summaries, not personnel records. As such, they are necessarily brief and do not contain extensive information as might be found in a personnel file. Each record represents one admission to the hospital. An individual with multiple admits will have multiple records, which may vary in content and completeness. The researcher is advised to view all the records of a name of interest.

2. The legibility of handwriting in the original records varies greatly among the recorders. As a result, the spelling of some names may be a "best guess" of the extractor. Some clerks wrote names as they heard them phonetically. The reader is advised to check for variations in spelling across records.

3. Some persons have information added to the record from other sources such as a city directory. Where information has been added it will appear in brackets [].

4. To access the collection: When an entry of interest is found, the researcher should either contact the WSHS Research Center by telephone, or electronically by submitting a collection inquiry using the online research request form. Advance appointments are required for on-site research. Photocopy and staff research charges may apply. Telephone inquiries should be made from 9:00 am-4:30 pm, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday when Research Center staff is available. Telephone contact: (253) 798-5914.